

"Above all, remember that you cannot be anyone's judge. No man on earth can judge a criminal until he understands that he himself is just as guilty as the man standing before him and that he may be more responsible than anyone else for the crime. Only when he has understood this can he become a judge. Absurd though it may sound, this is the truth. For it is possible that, if I myself had been upright, this man would not be standing before me accused of a crime."

THE BROTHERS KARAMAZOV - Fyodor Dostoevsky, 1880



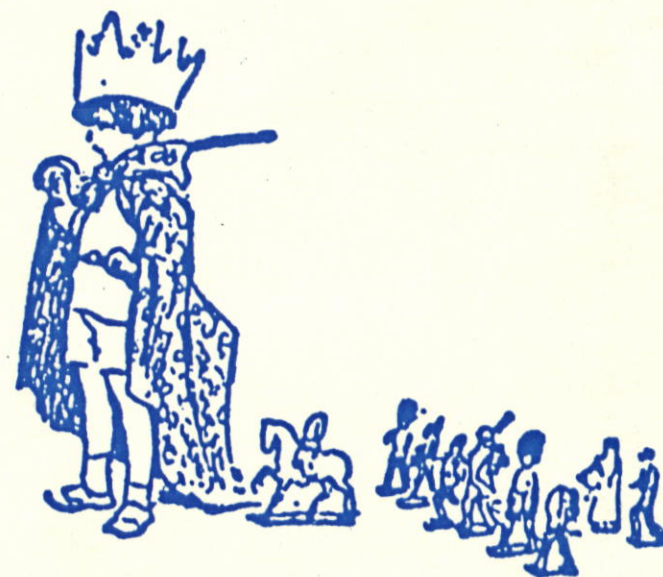
When it is so simple to blame others and call their shortcomings to our attention, we can with dangerous ease overlook and ignore the faults that are most clearly our responsibility and most easily corrected - our own.

promise

117 E. Cedar Ave. St. Louis, MO 63119-3044

promise

for
zine



Formerly 'time fanzine.' Contains interviewish things with Frail, Joycamp, Waterfront, and Doghouse Records; columns on pride, media, militancy, and more; personal stuff that none of you have any reason to care about; also a nifty photo page of young people contorting their faces for those of you who like that

#4

sort of thing.

promise

hardcore fanzine • number four

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Thanks so much for getting this far. I wish I could get better at this zine thing, and I am trying, but you will need to bear with me as I perfect my efforts. I do not pretend to be different than anyone else, so I hope my zine doesn't make it seem that way. I only want to be able to work out things I think about and say what is on my mind. I appreciate that people pay attention, and in return I promise to listen as well. Please write me; my mail has been sparse for the last year, and I miss communicating with people. If you have any thoughts at all about what I've written, let me know and prove to me that beyond the music that ties us together, there exists meaningful communication of some sort.

Zines tend to be very self-serving. They are pretentious and self-important. I sometimes get tired of reading the same old clichés and outpouring of unoriginal ideas. I think it's great that there are so many zines around these days, but I just wish they weren't all the same. Even that last sentence has appeared in countless pages before mine.

Despite the fact that I can get sick of zines, I continue to put one out, and I fear that mine also embodies the things I dislike. I have slowed in frequency, but in the last year, I continued to think of this activity as a crucial part of my identity. However, through this whole time, I have also wondered if this is all worth my time. I need to get some money together to print this thing, and the question arises: Is it worth it? I really don't know the answer. I just sat down and put a bunch of random thoughts on paper, so why should anyone want to pay for this? Wouldn't it be better of me to pay to print somebody else's thoughts, somebody who really knows what they're talking about?

Why do I continue to do this? Am I really going through all this trouble for the purpose of saving the world? I'll acknowledge that I'm still pretty naive, but not that much so. No zine is going to be the force that opens everyone's eyes and brings us together. I said before that I started the zine to become more involved in the scene, but what does that mean? Maybe it just means I wanted to be cool. Doing this is fun. I understand the idea of givers and takers, but the idea I'm struggling with is, whether or not giving to the scene means anything at all.

When I started doing a zine, I remember being excited because I felt like I had a lot to say, and, until that point in time, no way to be heard. I like to think that above all else, I do this zine to have a voice. It's true that it feels like a waste of resources, and I'll admit that making friends is a meaningful motivation for doing this. Still, I truly cannot imagine the virtual powerlessness of not being able to express myself to people. My opinions may not be the loudest or best articulated, but, like everyone else's, my opinions are absolutely valid. Nothing can change that, and I believe that everyone should have a forum such as this. The one thing I really believe and which gives me hope for the effort I put into this stuff is that, while the things we say may not make hardcore and punk the saviors of the universe, they do create aware and active people in a society where apathy is a way of life. I don't know when I'll get another zine done, but I certainly won't stop.

TO BE
CONTINUED...

I am currently embarrassed of my first zine. I don't sell it, and I show it to people as seldom as I possibly can. It wasn't the worst zine on Earth, but still, I have this impulse to run out, recapture all 50 copies and use them as kindling. The reason for this is that Time #1 is simply not an accurate representation of who I am right now. As the time passes and I procrastinate on this zine, my second issue becomes equally as inaccurate. I have even rewritten a few pieces that appear in this issue because my views have changed. I have noticed that the one thing that you never read in zines is an article proclaiming the author's ignorance. Nobody writes about not having an answer or at least an opinion. Obviously, that does not make the author look too good, and it does not make for the most informative reading either. Still, I must admit that what I know or think I know is only a tiny fraction of what I wonder about. I have millions of questions, and what you read from me may be just short term answers that I am not satisfied by. I read a zine in which a

guy wrote about science versus religion. I laughed when I saw the headline. Who is going to resolve an ageless theological debate in a zine? Actually, the article ended up being not at all so preposterous. He wrote about how we can theorize and wonder about religion all we want, but we can't make any proofs. We can use science to disprove plenty of ideas, but nobody is going to find the formula for God or something, and nobody is going to scientifically disprove the entire idea of religion. Still, for some reason, I have always plagued myself with trying to find out, or at least decide about such matters. I lay awake at night (it's always worst at night) pondering unknowns and fearing death. It is worst at night because that's when I'm alone and idle. When I am busy I have no time to think about fruitless debates. When I am with people, like my girlfriend, I feel too secure to feel afraid. I read a philosopher somewhere recently who said that people need not fear death because while they are dead, they cannot worry because they won't exist, and as long as they exist, they won't be dead, so that is not a valid fear. He went on to write that when we eat, we don't reach for the biggest portion of food and eat it all, but rather we reach for the best and eat what we want. As rational as this line of thinking and metaphor are, I can't bring myself to think that way. I know it makes sense, but I cannot think rationally. I think it is common that we say things and think things and want to believe things that go against our better judgement and that have no logical basis. I have written about how I know I should live, but that does not mean I always live up to my own standards. I have believed things that I know ought to be right, but through experience I have found that they are not. Often I just think things out on paper, and these essays I write are only a listing of ideas I have heard on a topic. I may not know how I feel until I reach the last sentence. I would like to say that I am not writing this as a disclaimer (and in fact the sentence I just erased said I wasn't); nevertheless, maybe a disclaimer is exactly what this is. If, in ten years, I am another product of society's cookie cutter, I want to be confronted for a reason why, but above all, I want to keep thinking. This zine is just me letting people in on my thought process in order to help them reach their own conclusions. Their thoughts should continue past my conclusions, and so do mine.

you
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1 year of

me me me...

In the days preceding June 16th, 1993, I was busying myself, trying to complete the second issue of my zine before my 18th birthday. I hadn't been at all happy with my first issue, and I had a strange desire to put together a somewhat fulfilling zine before crossing the formal line into adulthood. I wanted to be able to attribute that accomplishment to the minor I identified myself as rather than the adult I was soon to reluctantly become.

In fifteen minutes, it will be June 16, 1994. One year has elapsed since I sat in this same room cutting and pasting and working with this same computer. I want to say that a lot has happened in the last year and a lot has changed, but I also could say that very little has happened and nothing has changed.

At the end of August, I discovered myself in the back of my parents' car - which was loaded up with most of my belongings - on the way to Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Through an odd and mysterious series of chance events, I had been enrolled at Haverford College. During that car ride, it occurred to me that I was actually leaving home. All of this is a very long story, and I am uncertain of exactly how interesting it really is, but it is definitely better suited for another time and place. I will let it suffice to say that I lived there for a year, was not happy, realized my mistake, and will be going to school at Washington University back here in St. Louis next fall. I just got my acceptance letter a couple of days ago. Enormous thanks to Jason, Don, Eric, Mike and other people I met along the way for making my year a lot less hellish than it could have been.

At one time I predicted that this zine would be born before the end of last summer. Later I said before Christmas. After that I set March as a release date, and now, after missing all of these, I've had enough of deadlines. This zine will be out as soon as I figure out how to print it, and I would like to do another zine, but I have no idea when that may be. I started this zine as a senior in high school who had a lot of idle time and wanted to get involved in the scene. Now I am vastly more involved, but it's time for me to make another contribution. Idle time is something that seems to have grown far more scarce, and now I value what time I get greatly. I thought I would be a zine machine (so to speak) upon starting college. I envisioned myself sitting in my room doing homework, then spending the rest of my time typing away at my computer. As it turned out, I became busy with school, and I needed the rest of my time just to live. I can't explain every activity that occupied my time, but I discovered that I need to "waste" a little time now and then. My life can't consist of constant productivity.

I did manage to produce a mini issue number three and change the name of my zine. What was formerly time is now promise, and for those of you who missed that one page effort of last fall, the title is mainly inspired by my girlfriend, Margaret, whom I promised I would come home to and who promised to wait for me. As it turns out, neither of us saw any reason to wait another three years for me to graduate from a school that I did not need to attend, so I am back.

Lots has happened during the past nine months in that I experienced all of the little things that go on in one's life but in a new way because I was in a new place. Things have changed in this time in that I have had to adjust and readjust to different environments. Still, after all this, I am in the same place I started out, experiencing all of the same things I did before (and appreciating them more than ever before). In a way, very little has changed. My life in St. Louis is very separate from my life one thousand miles away in Philadelphia, and the longer I stayed in Philadelphia, the more difficult it became to resume the life I was familiar with here. Now I am once again the Ben Scholle who lives in St. Louis, sees his girlfriend, hangs out with his friends, works, and does all of those other familiar things. The only time that has passed for this part of me is the weeks I spent at home during breaks from school. The rest of this year is relevant to my overall existence, but it has little to do with what I'm doing right now.

I would like to apologize for becoming a practical recluse while I was living this other life of mine in Philadelphia. I should have done more zine stuff, I should have done a better job of keeping in touch with people, and I should have answered mail faster, but I didn't. I'd like to guarantee that this won't happen again; I kept telling myself that I would get back into a groove as

...blah blah blah

soon as I publish this zine. Still, I won't make any pledges because I don't want to break any. I started this zine because I had time on my hands, but I can't predict having that sort of time again anywhere in the near future.

I don't want to be apologetic about this product of mine because I don't think it is bad. Still, this zine is another thing that has changed minimally. The last issue was pretty close to this one if you take out the advertisements. I feel that I am capable of more, and don't know if I will be satisfied with little improvement over my previous attempt. I'm somewhat of a perfectionist (as most of us are), so I will keep trying. Please stick with me.

One thing that has changed with this zine is my interview style. I have trouble even reading through most band interviews because they tend to be either totally irrelevant and pointless, or else they consist of the interviewer recycling a stock question we've all read before, which prompts the interviewee to spout off the appropriate and expected response. I'm starting to switch over to a style of band interview that relies a great deal more on the band to do their own thinking. I would like to have simple written pieces or a sort of essay describing a band's lyrics. I think this ought to be a bit more interesting.

I did interviews with Doghouse and Waterfront basically because they asked if I would interview them. I didn't see any reason why not. Waterfront is a Salt Lake City band that plays a decent form of melodic hardcore and is gaining a following. I simply pieced together other interviews that their bassist, Dan, sent me, and he answered a few more additional questions I had. Doghouse records is the label we all know and love, and they continue to "weather the storm" in Ohio (whatever that means). The other two "interviews" I did were with two bands I chose because I like them and want them to get some exposure. Joycamp is a local band that I happen to be a part of, so the interview, while very self-serving, was easy. Frail are friends of mine from Philly, and their second seven inch was just released on Kidney Room Records; they also have some songs on compilations.

You will also find a piece about media. If you think you already know it all, you may skip over what I wrote, but I just have done a lot of research on the subject, and I felt like I should put it all together. The story about the train station deals a lot with the fact that I'm not very friendly. If you've met me, you probably found this out. It takes me quite a while to become comfortable with somebody, and it takes even longer to become friends -- this is why I can't let go of the good friends I have: It is too difficult to just replace the few people who I feel close to. At any rate, I'm never able to get to know as many people I would like to because I'm just too shy. I'm trying to get better, but it's a part of my personality, and occurrences like the one I wrote about keep getting me more and more discouraged. Let me say for the record here, where I can be more open, that if you ever met me and thought I wasn't interested in talking to you, it was probably more that I didn't know how.

I wrote a lot of things that just came to mind and I wanted to put on paper. In addition to being able to communicate with people, it helps me sort out my thoughts if I can put them down on paper. I really can't imagine a lot of people reading what I have to say, but I realize that any zine I get, I usually read all the way through. Maybe not every copy I print winds up on the floor at some show. Thanks for taking an interest.

I probably have a million other things I planned to fit in this introduction that I haven't, but that's okay; it's far past being too long. Keep sending me things to review. I don't print ads anymore, but I try to use the reviews as advertisements. Even if you have a zine you don't want me to review, send it for trade because I love getting zines and learning about the people behind them. Please write me if you feel in the least bit inclined to. I honestly try to write back for every letter that warrants a response. I want to get in touch with everybody who takes an interest in what I do. Communicate with me; that's what this is all about.

Thanks.



Metroschifter - LP

•God, I love Sunspring. Well, I guess Sunspring is gone, but this is the next best thing. Scott Richter teams up with a new drummer (Mario from 411) and bassist (Pat from Endpoint, etc.) and keeps pretty much the same songwriting and singing style as was present in Sunspring. I think the best way to describe the style is "interesting." It's just pretty straight forward hardcore that keeps your attention. At least it does when the string parts aren't going. I was excited to read that there were string arrangements, but actually, the string parts were recorded before the band even formed, so the string stuff sounds more like samples. It's also mixed way too low, so if one doesn't turn up the record loud enough, one hears just a two minute pause between songs. Despite that, this is good stuff that shouldn't be missed. (BS)

•This is basically the guy that wrote all or most of Sunspring's songs with a different band name. Good singing with, dare I say it in this zine, grunge (a la Soundgarden or Tool or something like that) riffs. A little darker sounding and less "Poppy" than Sunspring but good, good. (PG)
(Slamdek / P. O. Box 43551 / Louisville, KY / 40253)

Mohinder - 7" LP

•Good. After their first record came out, everyone was asking why it wasn't on Gravity. Well, the new one is, and it sounds even more like a Gravity release than that first Mohinder record did. A little bit more chaotic, but still they retain that crucial hint of structure. Mohinder is not pioneering a new genre, but they are playing this one at least as well as anyone else has. (BS)

•I like Mohinder even though most of the music in this style (fast fast fast, crust maybe?) sounds to me like Wayne and Garth playing guitar really fast. Wayne's World, Wayne's World, Party Time, Excellent, Wooo woo woo woo. (PG)

(S3 to Gravity / P. O. Box 81332 / San Diego, CA / 92138)

Mohinder / Nitwits - 7"

•Well, Mohinder is great, and I looked forward to hearing more from them after the first record. No surprises from them; this may not measure up to their own seven inch, but it's still quite good. Of course, Mohinder aside, the Nitwits rule this record. They play some of the sloppiest, best garage punk I've heard in a long time, and they totally make my day with the Cat Stevens thing at the end. They play fast, they're catchy, and they fit surprisingly well on a record with Mohinder. I need to find more Nitwits stuff soon. (BS)

•Mohinder plays fast without relying on speed. Not that they ever go slowly. The Nitwits are great, probably because I'm sick of rehashing all these serious emo records. (PG)

(Unleaded / P. O. Box 1333 / Cupertino, CA / 95015)

Mouthpiece - What Was Said - LP

•It's Mouthpiece, what do you expect? Do I really even need to write anything here? I like the fact that they play hardcore rather than heavy metal. I liked Chain of Strength, and I like this. The CD has all their stuff, and it shows how the seven inch may still be a bit more memorable, but it's all decent, and there is even a DYS cover thrown in. Worth listening to. (BS)

•New York City in '89 with cheesy metal production that keeps this from the edgy, aggressive music that this style should bring. (PG)
(New Age / doesn't put their address on their releases?)

Prozac Memory - Maphaker/Chisel Tone - 7 inch

•Prozac Memory has always been a good band, and I thought they were cool the first time I saw them, but their first record was only so-so. This new single really blows that first one away. This is mid tempo emo/pop stuff that is really catchy. "Chisel Tone" is definitely my favorite song of the two, but Maphaker is a good song as well. It's sort of annoying that this is another two song 45 that is over surprisingly and disappointingly soon, but it's still worth getting. (BS)

•That emo stuff. Maybe if I listened to this more I would like it. I remember seeing this band blow me away but this leaves me flat. (PG)
(Faye Records / P. O. Box 7332 / Columbia, MO / 65205)

Rancid - Let's Go - LP

•As if you don't know, Rancid plays raw upbeat punk rock with rough but singy vocals. They make their choruses into sing-alongs by filling the studio with back-up singers, and the songs (and there are quite a few) all manage to be extremely catchy. In fact, at times the melodies are so catchy, they can be downright annoying. Despite that, despite some stupid lyrics, despite the fact that you may have heard this before, and also despite the fact that the kid down your street might like them, if you want raw energetic Punk (with a capital P) this is it. (BS)

•I heard a Rancid song on the POINT (local radio station) the other day. If you haven't heard this band you will. Sing along choruses make this record. Much better than their monotonous first release. (PG)

(Epitaph / mail)

Red Aunts - #1 Chicken - LP

•Picture Rancid if they were screechier, not as catchy, and all girls. This is

good when, and only when, I'm in the right mood for it. (BS)

(Epitaph)

Sleeper - Preparing Today for Tomorrow's Breakdown - LP

•Wow. I am really impressed. I've heard some of this band's previous material, and I thought they were a pretty good band, but this record practically blew me away. I think they've realized all the potential they hinted at before. This is fast, intense emo with a lot of power pop mixed in. This is the sort of blend of power and melody I search for. Sleeper is one of the most underrated bands out there - a real sleeper (heh, heh, heh...). (BS)

•Isn't it strange when bands sound like their names? More of that emo stuff. (PG)

(Excursion / P. O. Box 20224 / Seattle, WA / 98102)

Sparkmarker - Products and Accessories - CD

•I don't know. I had really been looking forward to hearing Sparkmarker, but I still have mixed feelings. This CD is a collection of their new seven inches, and (I think) a comp. track. At times, they seem to really show an original style, and some parts are quite memorable. On the other hand, a lot of this just sounds like Quicksand being boring and repetitive. The most interesting part is the vocals, which sound neat in that he is singing, but those aren't really notes. Overall, this is interesting to listen to, but it isn't entirely captivating all the way through. (BS)

•Um, this is ok, I guess. That emo stuff with kinda cool textured guitars but other than that pretty bland. (PG)

(S10 to Final Notice / P. O. Box 1457 / Benall Centre / Vancouver, BC / V6C 2P7 / Canada)

Total Chaos - Pledge of Defiance - LP

•Well, this is raw and energetic in a way that is rare these days, but the package as a whole left me pretty disappointed. Big Mahawks, lyrics that are just huge clichés... I like nostalgia too, but this just comes off as a big joke. I guess they take themselves seriously; I just wish I could. (BS)

(Epitaph)

Threadbare - Hoover / Ignition - 7"

•I think they may have overdone some parts of this record. They spent more on this recording than they did on the demo, but was it worth it? In spite of some guitar stuff and slobbering vocal parts I could do without, this is a pretty good record. The packaging is even better, but you should put the record on tape so you don't have to mess with getting it out every time you want to hear it. I wonder if they have any songs that aren't named after Dischord bands. Their LP, "Lungfish," should be out on Doghouse soon. (BS)

•Grunt, growl, arrrr. I guess this could be intense if it wasn't so macho. Still pretty good and that's coming from one that hates hard-ass chunk. (PG)

(Watermark / P. O. Box 28849 / Philadelphia, PA / 19151-0849)

Waterfront - Confusing the Truth - 7"

•This is decent melodic hardcore stuff with kind of muffled production and music that is well played but not particularly memorable. This is also pretty old, so I'd expect them to be better now. They should have a couple of tapes out in addition to this record. (BS)

(Flatline Records / P. O. Box 520202 / Salt Lake City, UT, 84152 - 0202)

V/A - It's All About - Flexi

•This is a not so new compilation with tracks by Lazy Susan, Phleg Camp, Sleeping Body, and Stand Up. Overall, this is well done, and the music is pretty good by all bands. For some reason though, it sounds kind of funny on my turntable if I don't put some other record beneath it. (BS)
(Sorry, I lost the address; you can get it from Eballution.)

V/A - Land of Greed... World of Need - LP

•Well, it's hard to do justice to the Embrace LP, because it was already perfect. Still, it's interesting to hear these bands try. The best songs are the ones where the band actually tries to do an original interpretation rather than just playing a straight cover. More than anything, this made me want to pull out the real Embrace record and listen to it instead, but there's a wide range of bands, and this is for a good cause. You should buy it and be sure to read the informative booklet. (BS)

•A comp. Some good, some bad, most just kinda there, and I still haven't found that Current song. (PG)

(Watermark / P. O. Box 28849 / Philadelphia, PA / 19151-0849)

V/A - Education Compilation - LP

•Fourteen bands, including Floodgate, Bleed, Three Studies for a Crucifixion, Kisses and Hugs, and Policy of Three, make up one of the more pleasing comps I've gotten in a while. Some of the bands are indisputably better than others, but every song deals with education (as in school), and there is even an interesting booklet/zine that comes along with the record. Stuff like this makes me feel like hardcore is worth while. (BS)

(S6 to Mountain Records / 56 Grandview St. / Huntington, NY / 11743 - 3537)

band, but recorded they don't seem like the same band. It says in the record that it was "recorded and mixed in 68 hours." 68 hours! I hope that was a joke. The layouts are better than the music. Lyrics are normal Rob P. stuff. (DB)

(Doghouse / P.O. Box 8946 / Toledo, OH / 43623)

Fabric - 7 inch

•Okay, I've been putting off reviewing this record for about a month now because I never felt like listening to it again. Now I'm in my room, and the first song is going. Well, I like that it's fast, but this sounds a little too much like Skid Row or something. Why did so many people tell me this would be good? I think that side is over, so I'll flip it now. Actually, this song is a tad better, but I don't know if it makes this worth listening to - especially since this is a two song 45 (yuck). (BS)

•At 45 speed, this band has an upbeat, shrilly quality that, though somewhat original, isn't that great. The first song sounds like some bad metal band from Headbangers Ball (my personal favorite lyric is "doom beckons"). The second song sounds like that yelling, chunky, New England, heard-it-before-core, but even though they change musical styles, cheesy lyrics prevail. But, due to me trying to figure out which speed to play this, I found that this record sounds a lot better at 33 speed. (That'll teach you to not tell me at what speed it plays.) It's slow and moshy and danceable, and the second song sounds a lot like the amazing Melvins. Doom Beckons (PG)

(S3.50 to Doghouse / P.O. Box 8946 / Toledo, OH / 43623)

Falling Forward - Hand Me Down - CD

•Well, I'm sure they don't like being compared to either Endpoint or Split Lip, but the similarities are obvious. Falling Forward does have a distinctive sound, but the influences are plain to see. The music is cheeseball metal like Endpoint, and the singing is cheeseball emo like Split Lip. Well, cheese can please, and this does. The first half of this CD, which is the newer stuff, has some extremely catchy and memorable parts, and the last few songs are just sort of there. If this kind of thing doesn't make you sick to your stomach, you'll probably like Falling Forward. (BS)

•Wow. I thought that this kind of music had turned into the boring crap that is around now and I would never like another band like this, but Falling Forward proved me wrong. Somewhat cheesy in spots but, hey, what do you expect? (PG)

(Initial / P.O. Box 251145 / West Bloomfield, MI / 48325)

Fountainhead - Drain - LP

•I like. This has melody that fits well with the music, which still manages to pack some punch. There is definitely a Quicksand influence here. A few of the songs are quite a bit catchier than others, but overall, this is a good release that a lot of people will like. (BS)

•Slick. Real slick packaging. It seems that Doghouse and Watermark are in a contest for the glossiest inserts. Doghouse wins for the time being. There are even some pretty-boy pictures of each member of the band - very major label looking. In fact, it all kind of makes sense since a few members of Fountainhead are now in Orange 9mm, who are on Atlantic now. Hmmm. The music has a Quicksand feel or maybe more of a grab. The vocals are pretty much the best part of the record. Take the singer of Railroad, and try to make him squeeze out Walter, and there you go. Fountainhead fits in perfectly with a post hardcore label such as Doghouse. (DD)

(Doghouse / P.O. Box 8946 / Toledo, OH / 43623)

Four Walls Falling - Punish the Machine - 7 inch

•I really like Four Walls Falling a lot. This is three songs from their latest demo, which I don't really think matches up to the stuff that Redemption put out, but it's good anyway. This is just a bit more on the metal side, but I can still get into it. As always, their lyrics are good. Good luck finding this since it's on a German label. I think they're doing a new LP soon on a Czech label(?). It looks like they got a couple of the Chip 'n' Dales guys to pose for the cover art. (BS)

•This group adds an unusual twist to that boring sick, east coast sound: they make it sound good. "Punish the Machine," though too long at almost five minutes, is a real cool song that moves from good to better. The lyrics are kinda silly, and I've heard it all before, but who cares? He's angry. The other two songs, "Supreme Being" and "Aim," are really good too, one about religious fanaticism and the other a pro-choice anthem, again two subjects that I've heard enough about. "Aim" loses me when it uses those beautiful words of wit, "anti-choice" (come on, calling names and pointing fingers does nothing but polarize each side more than they already are) and I find it funny that there's a pro-choice song when the lyrics to "Punish the Machine" could easily be interpreted as pro-life in its mention of the government condoning the killing of millions. (PG)

(55 to Understand Records / Röttiser Str.33 / 08547 Jössnitz / Germany)

Frail - Idle Hands Hold Nothing - 7 inch

•This time Frail is more metal than last time, but definitely not in a bad way. It could just be because the recording is better this time. I think the music is also

a bit more quirky, and the vocals are still more screechy (once again, in a good way). Frail are definitely one of my favorite bands right now; I think the best adjective to describe them would be "frantic." Get this and see what I mean. It's too bad the packaging and booklet with cut-off margins don't do the record justice. (BS)

•Uh oh, more screaming and death metal guitars. The screaming is stylized so it doesn't just sound like someone getting mad; it sounds like the whiney guy from "Welcome Back Kotter." Horshack meets Rorschach? Better than the first but much of the same almost catchy riffs. This band is very idealistic which is cool. I'm jealous. (PG)

(S3 to Kidney Room / P.O. Box 589 / Village Station, NYC, NY / 10014)

Gamelace - Good - LP

•I'm not going to be like every other person who's reviewed this and say something like, "Wow, this really is 'good.'" Even though it's true. Gamelace play excellent, upbeat, melodic popcore. If you're into that, get this. (BS)

•I won't argue with the title, this is good. (doesn't that sound like something from a bad movie review that they'd use in commercials?) Sounds like the Descendents happy sound without going into the Descendents overly silly and cartoonish thing. Flows along smoothly until it ends, spreading happiness wherever it goes. (PG)

(Network Sound / P.O. Box 5213 / Huntington Beach, CA / 92615)

Guilt - Synthesis - 10 inch

•Well, I liked their first record. It was good straight-forward hardcore. The first thing one notices about this record is the way it is overpackaged (full color covers, purple vinyl, etc) to the point of making it as expensive as most full length albums. The music sounds like it might be the same band as before, but I'm not sure if I would have guessed that if it wasn't written on the cover. This squeally chunka-chunka takes its cheesy metal influence just a bit too far for my tastes. Sorry. Try and find the stuff they did as Stepdown. (BS)

•Ever watch Headbangers Ball on MTV? Maybe the samples in between songs are the commercials. Anyone for a game with my new purple frisbee? (PG)

(Initial / P.O. Box 251145 / West Bloomfield, MI / 48325)

J Church - Prophalaxis - LP

•Amidst an endless string of singles J Church springs a second album on us, and despite a few songs released elsewhere, this is a very strong effort. I would have to say I like it better than their first LP, which I thought really dragged at points. The songs on this one are consistently catchy pop punk stuff, and for a band with so much material, in my opinion they keep it surprisingly fresh. Although I think they have yet to match some of their very first releases, these folks are probably one of my favorite bands right now. (BS)

•Pop with twang. This is pretty darn good, but I'm not going to listen to it because they will probably stab me in the back when they eventually sell out. Yeah, I see them on MTV in a couple months or years, whether they like it or not. (PG)

(Broken Records / P.O. Box 460402 / San Francisco, CA / 94146-0402)

Junkdrawer - 7 inch

•I'm not sure when this came out or was recorded, and I can't even find an address to write the band and tell them how good they are. I hope they already know. This is the catchiest sort of emo pop that I am a complete sucker for. The singer's voice is just perfect; all in all the whole thing sort of reminds me of the One EP that came out on Watermark, except Junkdrawer lacks the rock and roll polish that detracted from that record. I love it, I love it, I love it! I need more than three songs. (BS)

•This is what hardcore people call melodic even though it doesn't have one melody in it. Poppy and good. (PG)

(Freewill / 1650 Trenton St. / Denver, CO 80220)

Lazy Susan - Pinwheel - 7"

•Wow, this is the catchiest thing I've heard in a long time. Really, that's what the music is based on: catchiness. The singer has a unique falsetto singing style (or a "unique eunuch" style...). Anyway, although you could disregard the lyrics if you want, this is great stuff that I listen to still even though I've had it for a year. There should be an LP floating around, but good luck finding it (let me know if you do). (BS)

•Ahhh, a breathe of fresh air. Melodies and happy lyrics. Now if they would've just left off that stupid, worthless, #@!\$!\$ "Waco in Waco" song. (PG)

(Break Even Point / Via Vallerbana 28 / 00168 Rome / Italy)

Lifetime - Tinnitus - 7 inch

•This is easily Lifetime's best stuff so far. It's fast, driving hardcore that is technical, raw, and melodic all at the same time. Even people who have always hated Lifetime have said they love this. I really hope they stick around for a while, because I get the impression that the best is yet to come. This is also available on CD along with a remix of their first seven inch for those of you who like that sort of thing. (BS)

•I thought Lifetime was bad but I'm "selling out" and going against my previously held conviction. Singing over chunky emo guitar.

(S3.00 to Glue / 51 Columbus Dr. / Franklin Park, NJ / 08823)

interview with Dirk from

Doghouse Records

Done through the mail in April and May 1994

1. What would you say is your goal with Doghouse records?

I started Doghouse just to release the first 7" by Majority of One. I really didn't expect anyone else to do it, and I didn't have any connections, so I did it myself. I never really expected to continue doing the label. After Majority of One was signed to First Strike in England, I basically quit doing Doghouse. At the time, I didn't really want to do a label. Only when I realized that the First Strike stuff was difficult to find in America did I decide to release the MOO "Rage" 7" on Doghouse. I then did the Transcend, and I guess from then on, especially with our fall out with First Strike, I decided I could do a better job than the other labels that I had experience with. So I guess my goal has been to run a label with the interests of the bands n mind. I got screwed by other labels, and as a musician, I didn't think it was fair that bands always got dicked. I also wanted to be involved with other bands that I really liked. I saw friends in bands getting fucked by other labels, and I attempted to help them out.

2. Your records have been manufactured and distributed through Cargo. A lot of labels complain about going through larger companies. What has been your experience?

That's a whole story in itself, and I'll just touch the surface in this interview. I'm now in the process of writing of my experience with Cargo for an article in HeartattaCk, so check that out. Anyway, the whole Cargo thing started with them wanting to press the Majority of One albums in America. This led to them just taking all of Doghouse on as a Production and Distribution deal. This allowed me to release up to one album a month, and they would pay for the manufacturing costs, and that would in turn give them the rights to distribute the releases exclusively. At the time this was a dream come true for me. I

never imagined having the money to do CDs on my own, and to be able to do albums for the bands I loved was just great. It went well at first, and Cargo was excited about the label. Unfortunately, that all fell apart, and Cargo started to be apathetic about the label. They didn't push the stuff as much as I thought they could. The prices were too high, and neither Doghouse nor the bands were receiving money. We had trouble getting the releases for our mail order, which made us look really bad to kids who had to wait months to get the stuff. It just ended up sucking really bad. I finally had enough, and with some great stroke of luck, Cargo agreed to end the contract and give me back the parts to my two new releases (Endpoint and Fountainhead). That's why you'll see the Cargo logo blacked out on the Endpoint CD and cassette. Now that we're independent, everything is so much better. I don't have to deal with anybody that's not interested in the music.

3. In an interview I did with Current, Matt told me that he felt like his band was not given fair attention by your label. Do you find that it is difficult to give every band the attention it may need? Have you ever gotten overwhelmed with all that needs to be done?

Yeah, I thought that what Matt said was unfair. I was actually really interested in doing the Current record. I really loved their demo and 7", and I know some of the guys, so I was really into doing it. It just happened that Current came along at a bad time. I was so busy with other stuff, and I never had enough money to do the stuff I wanted. I explained all of this to Current, and I tried to make things work, but they didn't. They were trying to get the album out before their summer tour, and I explained to them that I couldn't pay for the recording, because I had to pay for a bunch of stuff for the Bloodline/Transcend tour in Europe. I've heard lots of rumors about why Current didn't end up on

media and culture

Okay, I'll admit that the entire subject of mass media has already been fairly well addressed in zines, but I still have something to say on the subject. Maybe this will cause you to look at things a little bit differently. I'm not really advocating the elimination of television in this article (as if that were at all possible). In fact, I may actually work in television or film someday. I'm mainly just trying to say that we have to be careful about the ways we receive our information. Anyway, here you go:



As I'm certain you know, America and most of the world receives most of its information from mass media (television in particular). The information presented via these media is also generally accepted as truth by the majority of its viewers. Therefore, it is important to ask just who is controlling what we hear and see and just how we can overcome their influence.

Is it the separate television networks that control our information? Not directly. The head of the networks *are* the official heads of information, but even the board of directors of a large network has to answer to somebody. In this case, the government and the advertisers have a great deal of power over what we see and learn from TV. In our society today, mass media (especially television) shape the way we see the world. Because of this, the powers that control media control how we think and act to a certain extent.

Since its birth in the 1930's, television has become, by far, the most important medium of communication in the world. In fact, television is no longer simply a communication medium; it has become an institution. Almost every household in the United States has at least one television. Families devote hours each night to watching the nightly news and their favorite prime time programs. The average American watches 800 television advertisements every week. Even the people who watch little or no television are impacted by it almost constantly. What appears on the television both reflects and shapes our culture.

In many ways, television is dangerously more of a preoccupation for Americans than an institution. Many aspects of our daily lives revolve around television programming. Our conversations and our schedules often are determined by what we see on television. The routine day for the majority of working class Americans consists of going to work, then coming back home to watch the nightly news. Children, who don't have full time jobs, are able to watch cartoons every day after school. After dinner, which is usually eaten at a convenient time that does not interfere with prime time programming, the family watches its favorite programs. After another half-hour of news they go to sleep until the next day. During the times of the day when one is not watching television, it is common to occupy oneself by discussing television with others. Several idle conversations during the working day begin with "Did you see _____ last night?" or "I saw something interesting on TV the other night." Many people are becoming content with allowing fictional characters to experience life for them.

In addition, we allow talking heads and documentaries to do much of our thinking for us.

With so much of our time spent watching television, it also becomes a major source of information. There are two types of programs that we take information from. One type includes news and documentaries and is based on fact. The other type is fictional programs such as dramas and sitcoms.

The most common source of information on television is the news. Each night there are at least two hours of news on most network stations. These programs fit nicely into the television oriented schedule of the average working class American. One can learn the events of the day while relaxing after a day of work. In addition, there are news programs in the morning to replace the morning paper. Numerous daytime talk shows deal with factual subjects. These regular installments of television news are the only news many people see. In our society, television and information have become synonymous with each other. For most, sitting in front of a television is a far more convenient way of learning about current events than reading about them.

Another source of information is documentary programs. Documentaries are designed for entertainment, but they inform the viewer as well. Often documentaries are based on subjects that the viewer knows little about. A documentary is very far from actual experience for the viewer. A television documentary is merely the producer or director's interpretation of a subject. Often that interpretation is influenced by outside forces such as sponsors or ratings. For instance, if a program airs a segment that is critical of one of its advertisers, it will lose the support of that company.

The most dangerous source of information on television is the fictional drama or sitcom. In fiction the entire program is a dramatization that exists solely for entertainment. Most viewers are aware that these programs are not based on actual events. However our minds see much fiction as an accurate representation of reality. Fiction serves as news, because it shows people how life should be. As Neil Postman says in Amusing Ourselves to Death, "How television stages the world becomes the model for how the world is properly to be staged."

The information that television presents to the viewer is accepted more easily than information from other sources. Easy acceptance is due to the passive state of mind created by television viewing. Because of this passive state, watching television is often interpreted by the viewer as actual experience. Such a submission

that they were the victims for having to live with so much blood on their hands and guilt in their minds.

The conclusion I came to through all of this was that you can't blame the individuals for a crime against humanity. I even look at Hitler in much the same way that I look at most criminals in today's world: The poor guy must have been somehow detached from reality and unable to distinguish right from wrong.

Because I can't blame individuals, I will not bring myself to want to use violence against them. In addition to that, I have no desire to sacrifice myself for any cause. Of course I'm willing to go through hardships for what I believe in; that's only natural, and I do believe in things. I just can't feel so strongly that I would really want to put my life on the line. It is considered the most patriotic act possible to give one's life to a cause. Would I ever want to be a martyr? No! If I were drafted into a war, I would go to Canada as soon as possible. I would rather live under heavy oppression than not live at all. (That's not to say that Canada is heavily oppressive, but rather that I would not fight for freedom because it is not worth my life to me.) I am fully aware that many people would give and have given their lives for causes, but am I strange because I can't sympathize with that desire? Do I just have a highly apathetic personality? I don't think I am strange. I can fully understand dedicating one's life to something; I just could never dedicate my death. I'm sure some people can, but I believe that in many cases, that too is selfish. There's a lot of romance behind self-sacrifice, and some people would rather be dead and remembered as an extraordinarily selfless person that live in mediocrity. Maybe I just can't lie to myself that way.

I think that a lot of the time, the hate people feel is just hate in general and frustration with the world misdirected towards a single person or group. Also, often these emotions seem really forced, almost as if someone wants to care more than they really do.

I think that explains why so much talk is seldom followed by action. People, in general, are going to act in accordance with how much they care about something. I care about the fact that equality does not exist in this country or this world. I am also completely willing to go through sacrifices to change that fact. However, I won't pretend like I'm willing to do more than I actually will.

A charity group once called people and asked, "Do you feel it is right that people in the world are starving to death?" After hearing the person on the other end of the phone say, "Of course not!" the caller would ask, "How much money are you willing to give in order to end that problem?" That's when people would find out how much they really cared.

All of the people who go on and on about their hate and thirst for blood are going to find out just how strong that hate is when it comes time to turn the emotions into actions. Not many people are as dangerous as they wish they are or want to seem. Voicing dissatisfaction is a vitally important thing, but the result should be positive action, not negative emotions. If you think hardcore (and life itself) is about hate, violence, and anger, you're lying to yourself and hurting the rest of us.

I am not militant. I'm not militantly straight-edge; I'm not a militant animal rights activist; I'm not a militant environmentalist. I would consider myself all three of those things, but never in a militant way.

It seems like the big thing now is to be full of hate and desire to vanquish all your foes with the power of your animosity. Or should I say to hate a thing to the point where your hate controls you rather than you controlling your hate? I really apologize, but I just don't feel like I'm fighting some war.

Maybe it's just me. Perhaps I'm not an angry enough person to be militantly for or against something. To be honest, I don't think there's that much hate in me. Does that mean I don't care about anything? I know that there are things I care about, and there are things I want to work very hard for. Still, for some reason, I can't get myself up to hating another person. Most of all, I can't stand the thought of actually using violence toward another person to accomplish my own ends. I don't feel like I have the right to hate someone so strongly.

So what's your verdict? Have I had too easy a life? Has it all made me apathetic? I won't deny that I haven't had to deal with a lot of things on a day to day basis that I'm sure would make me pretty frustrated with life. Nonetheless, I don't think I could force myself to hate someone. People have done it in the past. The Nation of Islam used their oppression to create hate and militancy. That just led to more hate, more separation, and forever increasing animosity between groups. In countless ways, history has proven that hate is not a positive emotion.

Even when things seem to go against me, I mainly just get frustrated with life and the world. I try not to turn that into anger towards other people. Am I too naive? I guess I'm one of those people who believes in the inherent good of human beings. So far, nothing I've seen has made me see things otherwise. I can hear people screaming, "What!? Are you blind? Look at all of the evil and suffering in the world. How can you say that people are good?" Well, I suppose I tend to blame humanity rather than the individual human. I get frustrated with the world, with humanity. I don't want to transfer that hate to individual people.

I just finished reading a book, Eichmann in Jerusalem, by Hannah Arendt. The book was about a Nazi war criminal and his trial in the early 1960's in Jerusalem. Adolf Eichmann, the criminal, had been in charge of a department of the German government that dealt with the transportation and extermination of the Jews. I think everyone will agree that it's difficult to find an event more evil than the Holocaust. If there is any person to hate, a man who contributed to the murder of hundreds of thousands of human beings would probably be a good target. Still, as I was reading the book, I could not find it in me to hate this man, Eichmann. He knew what was happening, but he was only doing his job. He never could have personally killed another person, but the Holocaust seemed to him to be a necessary evil, given the situation. Even the German soldiers in roving death squads were not necessarily guilty. They were told that what they were doing had to be done, and if they didn't do it, someone else would. The soldiers' superiors told them

to the TV allows the distinction between fiction and reality to become poorly defined.

Unlike television, written media enables the reader to digest and process information at their own pace. Television programs often proceed at a pace at which thinking merely gets in the way. When one reads from a book, one has time to form and opinion on what the author says. Events on a television screen occur so rapidly that the viewer is not allowed time to form such an opinion. A state of watching television is very similar to a state of hypnosis; the television is the focus of all of the mind's attention. The rate of information on television can easily be raised to a level where the mind cannot process the information. The mind becomes passive, and the subconscious mind accepts information without thought.



Because information is not processed, the mind can easily mistake watching television for experience. "Whatever information the senses produce, the brain trusts as inherently believable." This belief in sense perception is the foundation, the given, for human functioning." The distinction between seeing the troops land on the shore and seeing the television interpretation of the troops landing becomes vague. In Four Arguments for the Elimination of Television, Jerry Mander writes about the perception of television viewers:

"Interpretation and representation of the world were being accepted as experience, and the difference between the two was obscure to most of us....They didn't seem able to make distinctions between information which was preprocessed, and then filtered through a machine, and that which came to them by a whole, actual experience."

Because it is difficult to consciously analyze what we see on television, fiction can be mistaken for reality. In the case of documentary programs, we see a dramatization and mistake it for an accurate portrayal rather than an interpretation. In the case of fictional television, we see the fiction as an accurate representation of reality. In both cases viewers often mistake the information from television to be truth. It is actually a distorted version of fact.

In order to make any sense, fictional television must be somewhat based on fact. In some cases, the fictional footage we see is a made-up story that takes place in the real world. In the 1950's, several TV sitcoms portrayed families that represented the perfect family.

Families that watched these sitcoms often got the impression that everyone else's family was perfect and thus there was something wrong with their family. In No Sense of Place, Joshua Meyrowitz explains, "We cannot play certain roles unless the stages for those roles exist." No television program has ever directly told a family how they should behave. However, many programs have established a fictional family for real families to emulate. We are fully aware that the fiction on TV is not reality, but it is not always clear that TV is not an accurate representation of reality. The mind and the senses are not aware of the many tricks used by television to alter reality. In real life there are no cuts, takes, or skips over uninteresting hours in time. What is shown on television is what the audience will find entertaining; it is not meant to reflect reality, but to people whose information comes from television, it often does.

Also in Jerry Mander's book, a study showed the following statistics. "Heavy viewers of television were more likely to overestimate the percentage of the world population that lives in America; they seriously overestimated the percentage of the population who have professional jobs; and they drastically overestimated the number of police in the U.S. and the amount of violence. In all these cases, the overestimate matched a distortion that exists in television programming. The more television people watched, the more their view of the world matched television reality."

Broadcasters often argue that fiction cannot change human behavior. However, each year, more than ten billion dollars of advertising are sold. This is a painfully obvious example of just what effect TV and media can have on behavior. If viewers could clearly separate fiction from reality, advertising would be totally ineffective.

Most methods of persuasion on television appeal to the subconscious by way of the conscious mind. Subliminal methods appeal directly to the subconscious, bypassing consciousness completely. Most people affected by subliminal methods are not even aware that they are being persuaded. Television broadcasters found sex and violence to be the most effective means of keeping attention. Subliminal ads often use images related to sex or violence to bring attention to themselves. The images they use are usually so subtle that they appear only to the subconscious mind. In 1973 television commercials for a game called Husker-Do, contained high speed frames that were imperceptible unless the commercial was viewed at reduced speeds. The frames spelled out, "Get It!"

Another way that information is easily distorted is through restagings of real events. A program called "Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow" consisted almost entirely of reenacted footage of actual stories from the news. The purpose of television is to entertain;

a program is not successful unless it entertains the audience. The reenacted footage becomes a "dramatization". "Dramatization" means that a true story that is made more dramatic so that it will appeal more to the audience. When the human mind reads or hears about an event, it creates its own mental picture of the event. When the mind is shown a concrete image, the concrete image replaces the one the mind creates. In this way, our interpretation of an event matches the interpretation of a producer or director when we are shown a dramatization. An example would be how when you see a movie, then read the book, you picture the scenes in the same way you saw them on the movie screen. However, when you read the book first, you can tell how the director's perception of the book differs from your own.



The information we receive from television news is distorted as well. A television program is unlike a newspaper or magazine in that it can only convey one message at a time. When a newspaper reader is disturbed by an article, he or she can go to the next article without the newspaper losing a reader. When a TV viewer switches the channel, the program loses ratings. Short term ratings determine profits due to advertising. Good reliable news is not as important to advertisers as immediately good ratings. The purpose of television has become emotional gratification. In order to attract viewers - and thus advertisers - news must be made palatable. Enthusiastic newscasters and music are often used to decrease the realism of depressing or alarming news. If more than forty-five seconds is spent on one subject, it gives the viewer too long to reflect on a depressing subject.

In addition to the intended distortion of news, there is also unintentional distortion. Television has a natural bias against the excluded. When a group or event is not related to the broadcasters, the advertisers, or the majority of the viewers, it is generally overlooked. "...at the top of most news organizations today, at least 95 percent of decisions are made by white males, many of whom live in the cities and have long since stopped caring about the cities." A disproportionate amount of news applies mainly to white, suburban males.

By distorting fact through subliminals, fiction, and restaging, the groups that control television can control the way we act and think. It is the nature of those in power - in this case the government and advertisers - to try to remain in power. An important way to make people governable is through state of mind. By ignoring or downplaying important issues, the groups that control the news make us apathetic

and complacent.

Businesses that advertise are in control of information in three ways. Indirectly, they cause television programs to seek ratings rather than substance in order to attract advertisers. Businesses also directly influence information through advertisements and manipulation of the content of programs.

Because television access is expensive, it is generally controlled by the powerful. It is the tendency of the powerful to protect their power. Since the powerful business and organizations are the ones that can best afford to advertise, they have more influence than smaller groups.

Ownership of large media organizations often belongs to major corporations. As reflected by the recent acquisition of NBC by General Electric, many news agencies are merely subsidiaries of larger companies.

Ben Bagdikian wrote, in *The Media Monopoly*, "Twenty corporations control more than half the 61 million daily newspapers sold every day; twenty corporations control more than half the revenues of the country's 11,000 magazines; three corporations control most of the revenues and audience in television; ten corporations in radio; eleven corporations in all kinds of books; and four corporations in motion pictures."

It is in the best interest of a corporation that news pertaining to itself portrays the corporation in a positive light. Some corporate owners directly tell media companies what to broadcast; others will not directly dictate what news says, but they will hire and fire people according to how they broadcast the news. Even when a company is not directly owned by another, it is common for corporations to share members of their boards of directors. A member of the Sears Roebuck board was also a member of the board of the Chicago Tribune at a time when Sears was accused of dishonest advertising. Not coincidentally, the Tribune was the only newspaper in the city that did not report the accusations against Sears.

As well as controlling the information broadcast on subsidiaries, advertisers control much of the content of sponsored programs. In 1980, Mobil Oil, which was a large sponsor of PBS, told the network not to air a documentary. The documentary portrayed Saudi Arabia, which Mobil depended upon for oil, negatively. In 1976, Wilson Bryan Key went on a publicity tour for his book, *Media Sexualization*. In most of his interviews, he was criticized by the interviewers, and most of the interviews were sponsored by businesses that his book accused of subliminal advertising.

Many corporations give sponsored corporations guidelines that they must follow. "NBC's news program in the early 1950's was called 'Camel News Caravan' after its sponsor,

this was a statement that was in conflict with the concept of Ahimsa (nonviolence). I didn't want to be a sexist and I didn't want to live in the temple anymore, so I left, moved back to Utah, got married, went to work as a florist, and occasionally took a bouquet of flowers to the Utah ISKCON temple....although I was no longer *physically* in ISKCON, I was still *psychologically* with them in a lot of ways. After I moved out of the temple, I could no longer agree with them the same way I used to. Gradually, I started seeing and believing things differently than they do. I eventually quit my job as a florist and as a result, I was no longer able to give the Utah ISKCON temple flowers. Because I was no longer able to donate flowers, anytime I went to a Sunday Feast or any type of celebration, they barely acknowledged me as just another *Karmi* there for the food. I no longer go to the temple. I'm no longer involved with an organized spiritual group....

I believe a person can have appreciation for any religious tradition without making a commitment to that particular faith. I think it's good to study all the different religious traditions of the world. If you don't buy into all of a particular religious doctrine, then just take what you want and leave the rest. I see a lot of people criticizing the founder of a particular religion instead of criticizing the people of a particular religion for distorting the instructions of that deity or religious founder... It's sad when a person allows an organization to destroy their faith or spiritual pursuits....

For me, spiritual life is about compassion, tolerance with people who believe differently than I do; Ahimsa (nonviolence); respect for life; vegetarianism; making a conscious effort not to agitate the minds of my fellow humans and animals; equality (Nannaste) acknowledging all beings as equal entities whether they be a scholarly and dignified priest or a cow, elephant, dog, or dog-eater. I want to rectify my faults, my judgmentalness, my sexism, my speciesism.... I didn't find it possible for me to do these things in ISKCON, so I left.... I've always been a little hesitant to say anything negative about ISKCON because they are fundamentalist, and fundamentalism scares me, but I carry weapons and I've learned how to shoot my semiautomatic pistol really well, so I think that I will be OK.... I have had negative experiences in both of the organized religious traditions that I've been involved in (the Hare Krishnas and the Christians/Mormons), but I haven't allowed these negative experiences to affect my relationships with Christ or Krishna.

WATER•FRONT
P.O. Box 70736
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84170-0736

All Waterfront members eat only lacto-vegetarian food; we are not vegans. We feel veganism is a good thing for those who can pull it off... I want to make the transition to veganism - I want to be able to pull it off when the time is right. BGH has made things even worse for the cows -- I've set a goal for myself: I want to be vegan by October 1, 1994. I feel weak every time I consume dairy lately...

I personally don't want anything to do with organized judgmentalism, dictatorship or violence -- so the Hardline concept within the Hardcore scene is not my cup of tea.

Like every other cause within the alternative music scene, SXE has been both beneficial and detrimental. Beneficial, in my opinion, because I don't see any real happiness in a lifestyle that revolves around intoxicants; the end result can't often (not always) be anything from a drunk driving accident to an accidental (or intentional) overdose. Detrimental, in my opinion, because it separates the people in the scene who choose not to or just can't live up to a lifestyle of abstinence from intoxication. There are things to be learned from everyone - straight or not straight.

None of the members of Waterfront affiliate themselves with organized religion.... I was involved with the Hare Krishna's quite heavily for about 2 years.... In the name of becoming "pure", I became a fanatical, fundamental, judgmental, sexist person with no contentment or serenity.... I am no longer a fundamentalist. For the first time in my life I am finally content with my own spirituality. I don't feel I need to try to convince anyone about the validity of my faith (in hopes that in doing so I can convince myself).... I left ISKCON because I lost faith in its validity. I felt like I was serving an organization rather than a God. The organized belief systems within ISKCON kept falling short of my spiritual needs. I became a purity freak. I had a sexual fetish to somehow be spiritually beyond the urge of sex. I was constantly judging myself and others in my mind - and sometimes in my words. While I was living in the temple, I finally started becoming honest with myself. I realized it would be best for me to leave the temple, get married, and pursue my Vaishnava interests outside of the temple live-in quarters. I approached a big shot in ISKCON and told him my feelings about wanting to get married, etc. His verbatim words were, "Bhakta Dan, you want to avoid marriage because ultimately, a woman is nothing more than a different type of toilet for a man to pass a different type of stool into." I felt

Camel cigarettes, which banned all film of news that happened to take place where a No Smoking sign could be seen in the background." Proctor and Gamble issued the following memo to sponsored programs that was meant to protect the image of business.

"There will be no material on any of our programs which could in any way further the concept of business as cold, ruthless, and lacking all sentiment or spiritual motivation.... Special attention shall be given to any mention, however innocuous, of the grocery and drug business as well as any other group of customers of the company. This includes industrial users of the company's products, such as bakeries, restaurants, and laundries."

Not all advertisers behave in the way that Proctor and Gamble or Camel Cigarettes did. It would be foolish, however, for any television program to act against the best interest of its sponsors.

The two main forces that hold much of the power in the United States are government and business. In order to maintain that power, these two forces work together in a sort of partnership. The government uses its influence to help the business keep its influence. Businesses use their influence to help the government keep its influence. In media, the most powerful groups tend to have the most credibility with the public. The business-controlled media often concentrates on issues that are mutually convenient for business and government. At one time, the phrase, "special interest" referred to the interest of businesses. The phrase, "national interest" referred to the people. In today's media, the terms are reversed, and "national interest" now means the interest of business. The Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI) was a program that would have benefited many businesses by giving them enormous contracts. When SDI was introduced to congress, unrealistic amounts of technology and money were called for. The mainstream media, however, hardly criticized SDI at all.

During the Vietnam War, the press was allowed a great deal of freedom. In the United States, television viewers were able to watch combat scenes firsthand. The impact of the war on television caused its popularity in the U.S. to fall. Partly because of the poor public support, the Vietnam War was a failure. The military officers of the Vietnam War - today's generals - blamed the press for the failure of the war.

Currently, most of the press in the U.S. is supportive of the military. The mainstream media has had very little criticism for the most recent military operations. When arms buildups have required justification, the media has helped the government by creating enemies. The fear of the press shown by the military, along with the sympathy toward the government shown by the press, has caused a great deal of misinformation.

In the U.S. invasion of Panama, the press was not allowed into the country until after the invasion had begun. All of the media reporters who reported on Panama were given very little

information by the military. The official death count given then was around 200; rumors suggested that it was nearer to 2000. The press that shared interests with the government reported what they were shown. They even helped the government to de-emphasize casualties by portraying the Panamanians as unimportant "mere Panamanians." Only small independent news agencies with no connection with the government attempted to uncover facts about what happened during the invasion.

In Operation Desert Storm, the military withheld information, and the media, for the most part, cooperated. The military used euphemisms in such ways as substituting "serviced the enemy" for "killed the enemy." The military also did not allow any pictures of dead bodies to appear on television or in photographs. As in Panama, the media dehumanized the Iraqis. These techniques helped to downplay the reality of war. Along with the "play by play" television coverage, and the "we-they / winner-loser" frame of reference the media used, these factors turned the war into more of a sport in the eyes of Americans.

Even before television emerged as the main source of information, businesses and government worked together to preserve each other's power. Besides keeping access to media away from opposition, they went so far as to actually create periods of fierce anticommunism. In the 1920's the first "red scare" was used as a way to keep labor unions from becoming too powerful. In the 1950's the second large scale attack on communism was a result of fear on the part of large businesses. William Randolph Hearst, owner of several newspapers, was worried about the rise of communism. In 1950, Joseph McCarthy called Hearst and said that his list of "205 names known to the Secretary of State as being members of the Communist Party" did not contain any names at all. Hearst used his newspapers to give McCarthy credibility and keep anticommunism alive.

The importance of television and its power as a persuasive tool enable its controllers to maintain their power, and keep down their opposition. Most mainstream news and fiction is in some way sympathetic to business or government. Virtually nothing on television is free from bias. Only a small number of independent, written publications do not answer to higher authorities. We must learn to be careful not to blindly accept what we see on television and receive our news from a number of varied sources if we hope to find truth. It is extremely unlikely that the media can ever be unbiased, so we have an important responsibility to always be aware of the possibility that we are being manipulated and to be familiar with the methods that can be used to influence us.

An unpleasant

(scary, man)

DEPARTURE from an

other wise

SHELTERED existence

(hide under covers

now)



I had just been at the University for the Arts in Philadelphia. It was the last week of my first semester out on the East Coast, and I was eagerly awaiting a month of Winter break at home. All that was left was a couple of exams and I would be back where I belonged.

I was riding in a car with some friends who were on their way home. I had the option of going along and sleeping on someone's floor, but with tests to study for, I figured I ought to catch the train back to Ardmore, PA, where I lived and went to school. We drove around in the car for a while, and finally somebody spotted the entrance to Suburban Station. I had never been in that particular train station before, but I knew that I could find the train I wanted there, so I said my good-byes to the gang in the car and descended the steps into the station.

When I finally reached the area where the train schedules are posted, it was almost 11:00 PM. The second to last train had been at 10:50, and the next would come through at nearly 12:30. Anticipating a tedious wait, I sat myself down at the nearest bench. The underground station was silent except for the roar of an passing through the platform beneath me. All of the nearby stores had closed, and the only other people nearby were a few police and the occasional train passenger or maintenance person.

I had been sitting for about ten minutes reading through my German text book when a black man in ragged clothing approached and sat next to me. We exchanged greetings, and I continued to study. A few minutes later he asked me what train I was waiting for. I remembered my father once saying that it's dangerous to give people you don't know information about yourself, but I didn't see what harm there could be. I'm always so unfriendly, and I didn't want to seem rude to this man. I didn't want him to see me as a rich white kid who felt superior to him for whatever reason. I told him I was waiting for the Paoli train. He asked where I lived, and I said I lived in Ardmore. He asked if I went to school there, and I said I did. He asked what I was studying, and I said I had a German final coming up.

Next, a policeman came and said that the man needed to leave. The man asked why he couldn't sit on a bench, and the policeman told him that he couldn't smoke inside, and he needed to move outside. The man cursed a bit and complied. I was upset because we had been having a decent conversation, and I feared that the policeman was reacting to the fact that a poorly dressed black man was talking to a white kid with a backpack on a bench with nobody around. Soon afterwards, the police officer came back and asked, "Are you okay now?" I nodded my head, but I felt fairly angered by the fact that he assumed I was unsafe before. It was an obvious case of unfair treatment as a result of racial and class prejudices.

I sat and studied for twenty or so minutes more, and then the man came back from outside. He sat down saying something like, "Are you still here?" I wanted to apologize for the fact that he was made to move, but I didn't feel I knew how to. Possibly because he saw me as part of the reason he was kicked out, at this point the man became hostile. He asked me why I was still there. "Your train ain't gonna come," he said. Of course it was going to come. "What makes you think your train's gonna come?" It said on the board that it would be there at 12:45. He asked me where I was from, and I told him I came from St. Louis. He wanted to know why I was lying to him. I said I wasn't, and he became more angry. His logic made it seem that he was looking for a way to be confrontational towards me.

He asked me what I would do if someone hit me. I told him that I would run. I know I am a small guy, and I don't pretend that I can fight. He said I was a coward. He said I had to learn to stand up for myself or I would be a coward all my life. He continued like this, becoming increasingly belligerent, until he asked me if I wanted to be hit. Naturally I said I didn't, not taking it as the threat it was. The man told me that if I didn't want to get hit I should leave, and I had five minutes. I left. I went down to the platform, and that was the end. I feared that he may follow me down, but there were other people waiting on the platform, so I felt more safe. Still, I was just a little bit afraid of every one of those strangers.

Essentially, what I learned was that friendliness does not pay off. I am a trusting person, and I tend to over-estimate the good in people, but I must say that I am definitely less trusting now. I had tried to be friendly because I felt that I needed to, and what I was repaid with was threats. All I had really done was expose myself as a target for that man's rage against everything that I represent. Maybe it is a good thing that I served as an target for him. I know I learned from it, and he may have gained something as well. If nothing else, he felt powerful for a short time. He had power over me, and he was even powerful enough to defy the police officer's authority by coming back. In any case, I became even less inclined to offer my friendship than I had always been before.

noded an affirmative reply. What proceeded was what was from then on referred to as "Peter's Paper." Peter's paper was a ten page epic about his immigrant father's struggles, his parents' divorce, his partial deafness, and his learning disability. Peter wrote about how he had worked hard to overcome his handicaps. While this was an impressive and sympathetically inspiring story, it failed to lead me to his conclusion - that the women in the class needed to quit complaining about their oppression in society and just deal with it.

Of course, Peter failed to realize that, unlike his deafness, sexual oppression can actually be changed. Peter's paper was narrow and just pretty dumb. Still, it became the point of attack of many papers to come and the topic of discussion for a long time to come. Peter went on to be the devil's advocate in our class, acting as the adversary of common sense. One of his papers proclaimed how objectification and dehumanization of women was a very important male bonding experience for him. Of course, Peter represented an obviously existent viewpoint, but his attempts at rationalization obscured the actual appearance of much more deeply rooted problems.

Professor Hohenstein realized this, and made several attempts to get us to regroup and address topics in more depth, but we stayed in our rut. When, on rare occasions, the professor offered his input to our discussions, his lectures seemed disconnected and nonsensical.

"I sense a lot of anger in these papers," he would say. "When you're writing these, I want you to be very honest... I also want you to think about Hegle's work, as well as the essay 'Science as a Vocation.' There are a lot of really important feelings in this class that need to be expressed... Try to remember the girl in the stands..." I think this class can really look at some meaningful ideas, but it's up to you to get us there..."

Exactly what those textual references had to do with what he was talking about nobody knew. After all, we weren't officially assigned any required reading except for one thing - his own book, *The Left Side of the Church*. Who the girl in the stands was also was a mystery to us. We heard her mentioned every single time he commented, but it was unclear what she was supposed to represent.

My roommate and I had several late night conversations regarding Professor Hohenstein's sanity. In his favor was the fact that he was a college professor with a PhD. Actually, the longer I stay in school, the less that indicates one's sanity to me. Still, he seemed like a very functional and respected person. Against him were some of the things I have already mentioned, as well as his obsession with teaching and some of his methods.

Halfway through the semester, Professor Hohenstein was taken to the hospital. It wasn't the first time that the amount time and energy he devoted to teaching had affected his health. He said it was common for him to hit this barrier sometime in the spring semester. Doctors had told him to be less intense or else face an early death. He preferred to devote all his energy to his classes.

In addition to twelve hours of Foundations of Sociology every week, he also taught other courses. One of these was commonly referred to as the "skirts class." In that class, each male member was required to wear a skirt and high heels. Originally, the professor was the only male in the class, so he was alone in this requirement, but eventually participation was extended to men. Although it isn't the easiest thing to find, I would venture to say that there is a legitimate reason for doing this. However, exactly why Professor Hohenstein showed us his pictures is still beyond me. For twenty minutes at the end of a class we were treated to black and white photographs taken of his legs in seductive poses. He explained how a former student had wanted to photograph him in a skirt and stockings, and he asked us to write about our reactions to the photographs. I think all the papers for the next class ended up being about Peter's paper again, because nobody knew quite how to react to the pictures.

CONCLUSION:

During finals week, I finally read Professor Hohenstein's book, *The Left Side of The Church*. It turned out to be really interesting reading, and it made some very good points. Like the class, it had a focus on gender issues, but it probed much further into the issue. The primary point of the book was illustrated by a recurring analogy: Dish washing has traditionally been considered "women's work," and we need to find a way to overcome these traditions. However, just saying that women need not do the dishes anymore is not a solution because the dishes still need to be done. Mutual understanding and sharing of responsibility was what Professor Hohenstein believed in. That was what his class was set up to produce, and that is what his lectures would have meant to us if we had made an effort to understand him.

I am still not sure if this class has affected me positively or just served to make me more pessimistic. I know that when it was over, I realized that there had been an opportunity to learn a great deal, and it had been wasted. All along, I had felt ashamed to receive credit for what seemed like a twice-a-week discussion group, but later I realized I should have been ashamed of myself for treating it that way. Still, I was not solely responsible for throwing the chance away, as the professor said, that class had the ability to really make some progress, but we all allowed it to stagnate and dwell on trivial points. I suppose, if anything, I learned how a group of people can work together to abuse an opportunity given them to make progress towards understanding an important and confusing topic. I think I will major in Sociology.

In the spring of 1994, I was in a course at Haverford College called "Foundations of Social Theory." I needed a major, and I was in the middle of a process I call eliminating majors. I was taking classes in each of my fields of interest and thereby systematically eliminating them as potential majors. I had always thought I might enjoy Sociology, so I signed up for the introductory course. I'm still glad I did, but I can't say exactly why.

THE SETTING:

The first day, the class met in the school's auditorium. There were well over a hundred people there. At about 8:30 AM, a man (who looked like Woody Allen would look if he went for a month without sleep) walked in. His face was long and wrinkled, and his thin cheeks accentuated the bones in his face. His eyes were sunk slightly back in his head, and they were somewhat obscured by his low eyelids and prominent brow. He was Professor William Hohenstein. Personally, I slept through much of that first day, and this led to a great deal of my subsequent confusion, but I gathered that the class would be divided into three sections that would meet separately at different times during the day. There were to be four papers due at the end of the semester, and these would constitute our grade.

The professor read a speech given by Douglas MacArthur and told us to write an essay about it to be turned in the night before our section met the next Thursday. Within a week, the structure of the class was established. The forty people in our section would meet twice a week with Professor Hohenstein, and at the end of each class, he would read some selection for us to write about for the next class. Sometimes the reading would be an excerpt from a book, and at times he read from his collection of letters from past students.

The reading from each class was made available on the door of his office, and after we finished our reaction to it, we were to slip our writing under that same door. More than once I got my paper halfway under the door only to have it pulled the rest of the way by someone on the other side. I was not the only person to report this experience. The professor would diligently read through these papers in the two hours or so between sections, and he would select which ones he would read to the entire class. After class the papers went into file folders for each individual student, and after the semester, Professor Hohenstein told us, they were ritually burned in his fireplace.

The class had no texts; I did not buy a single book. Of course, we had to read for the final four papers that counted for our entire grade, but I just borrowed the books during finals week to read the essays I wanted to write about. During class time, we simply walked into class, waited for the professor, who was typically ten minutes late, then he read papers for roughly a half and hour. Next, we would discuss the papers, and he would finish the class with a reading. Midway through the semester, even these readings were done away with, and we simply wrote about what happened in class.

THE PLOT:

Our class was friendly and constructive for the first week or so. I even contributed to the class discussion once (one of three times I have done this in my college career). In the second week we hit the discussion of eating disorders, and the class was never the same afterwards.

My introduction to sociology was a shouting match between maybe six people with the rest of us looking on. Twice each week, at 2:30 on Tuesdays and Thursdays, we would meet to rehash, intensify, or analyze to death the same argument on gender roles. To me there seemed to be no end, and it was obvious that a conclusion was not possible, much less foreseeable. To myself and the people I knew in my section, rather than seeming like a course for college credit, Foundations of Social Theory more closely resembled one of those after school teen talk shows about controversial topics with the addition of a moderator who was operating on a different plane completely.

THE CHARACTERS:

Lila was right most of the time. That was a shame, because it was all too easy to disagree with her. I'm not sure what it was about her, but she seemed to embody belligerence. The expression on her face and the inflection of her voice conveyed hostility no matter what she said. In the first class that led us on our downward spiral, a guy mentioned that in his psych class the text suggested the original foundation of traditional gender stereotypes: At the beginning of humankind, it was most beneficial for the species for a man to find a number of women to impregnate and for a woman to find a single reliable mate to help her reproduce.

Lila immediately shot back, "Sure, but that's no excuse for those behaviors to continue today." "I agree," said the guy who made the original comment. "I'm just saying that this would be the reason these roles were established in the first place."

"Sure, but how can you say something like that is right? Our species has progressed beyond that."

The two of them continued to argue back and forth for the rest of the class, both of them on the same side of the issue. Not only did Lila inspire people with similar views to argue with her, but she also inspired people to take the side opposite of hers. For my roommate, who was also in my section, the class became "This is why Lila is wrong," rather than "This is what I believe." He wasn't the only person who based his opinions on whatever she argued against.

Peter was different. Peter was wrong. One class in February began with Professor Hohenstein looking toward an anonymous face and asking, "You sure you want to do this, kid?" The face

The following was written by Eric Hammar, vocalist for the band, Frail. He wrote out the lyrics to a song off of their upcoming seven inch, then a short explanation of those lyrics.

PARADISE LOST

Forget those barriers ingrained inside.

When will we understand that little separates one another?

Tangled emotions • Obscene contradictions • An underlying fear

Blatant acts of unseen effort • Blatant actions of unseen nature

Look away from our lost.

Stripped naked by the cold of our shallow thoughts.

This is our tragedy

Can't we understand? Can't we understand?

Wounded hearts. Wounded hearts. Wounded. Why?

I stared blank faced at the television as I watched a male wolf mount on a female wolf. The male moved with strong jerky motions as the female stood motionless and idle. I stared as the documentary rolled on explaining the wolves' tribal power structure and how wolves would battle and tear at each other to become the better. To battle to hold more status and to tear to hold more power. Wolves' only purpose was to climb to the top of their tribal ladder, only sooner or later to be forced down to the bottom by some other wolf wanting to fulfill his own destiny.

The documentary went on to explain how humans hated wolves with as much disgust as they would hate a demon. Humans would stop at nothing to destroy these wilderness devils.

Humans would reward other humans who exterminated these foul beasts from their land. Scorn and hatred solved by cold blooded murder.

I stared blank faced as the band played through their song as I watched us mount and kick and destroy one another to stand alone stop everyone else. The band moved with energy and

vigor as we threw our arms in the air turning a deaf ear to what was being screamed or sung through the microphone.

I stared as the band pushed through their set, all the time watching us battle and tear at one another for status and power. To battle to hold more status and to tear to hold

more power. It seemed as if our only purpose was to climb our own tribal ladder almost like wolves trapped in some endless cycle of class struggle.

The band finished with feedback and noise as we flocked from our hunting grounds to our marketplace. We

were alive with gossip and clothes. A selected privileged graced with the power of a king or an Indian chief. They sat mocking our foolish ways. Our

"leaders" would stop at nothing to destroy our own devils. "Leaders would award one another for words pointing a finger at our own hypocrisy, scorn and hatred solved by cold blooded and

useless words.

But what our "leaders" failed to realize as that their own success was created through their own scene struggle. Status built upon false beliefs and power collected with

tragic irony. We fuel ourselves on meaningless scene power and irrelevant "old school" status. We are what we have despised and always will despise.

So we stand isolated unwilling to cooperate with each other. Unwilling to give a little but more than willing to take. I can only ask us to look at ourselves objectively and

change because it is only up to us. It is up to us to look at one another and take the initiative.

I promise you my words aren't aimed at scene status or power. I have no plans to climb our scene ladder and play our pointless games. My words aren't cold blooded or vicious

or meaningless... but only you can make my words useless.

-Eric



Frail

612 Lakeview Dr.

Willow Grove, PA

19090

Have you seen all this "straight but not narrow" stuff? It's on bumper stickers, in zines, probably on coffee mugs and t-shirts somewhere. I guess they are supposed to be empowering statements of support for all those that aren't "straight," but I think they are screwed up, and, of course you've guessed by now, I'm going to tell you why. So let the voice of truth ring in vindication of the evils of those that are "straight but not narrow."

My first problem is with the word "straight." What does this mean? heterosexual? Let's define that term of sexuality, or sexuality in general. Most people are not hetero- or homo- like they are either male or female, with nothing in between. Sexuality doesn't work like that. Most people are bisexual to some degree, even though they try to talk themselves into one (usually the hetero) sphere or the other. I know I find some boys attractive, and I did, for a while, try to talk myself into being only hetero. The way I explain it (at least for me) is that if you took a pretty girl's face and put it on a boy's body, it would still be pretty, right? Okay, most of you reading this are saying, "I know this, please move on," so I will. If most people are bisexual to some degree, then people saying "I'm straight" as opposed to being un-straight is off the mark. (Also, people won't go around bragging about how they are bi- and therefore cool, but that's a different subject.) The line between hetero- and homo- should be greatly blurred, if not ended, and therefore the "us" and "them" for "us" vs. "them" mentally should end also. Sexuality is not a dichotomy.

Another problem is the word "straight" in that it implies that being hetero- is the right way to go ("take the straight path," "I'm going straight from now on," "straight-edge," etc.), and so then the other side is therefore the wrong way. In real life, using the word "straight" is okay, so I won't yell at anyone that uses it.

These are all obvious reasons to dislike this phrase, but the biggie for me is its attempt to side with the gay community but not get too close. It gives allegiance without commitment. The phrase seems to say "I'm for gay people, but I don't want anyone to think I'm one of them," or "I'm for gays, but I don't want to get beat up for it." This, to me, is a cop-out! These people want to take a stand against the establishment, they want to say that gay people are equal to the rest of us "straights," but they cannot bring themselves to admit that equally because they divide themselves from the "others" with the word "straight." Of course, it's better to try than to do nothing, and this message is a try, but I think it reaffirms homophobia. The people that promote this message are afraid of being equaled with one of those "queers," so they retreat by stressing that they are "straight" while stating that they are not one of these narrow-minded homophobes. Kinda ironic, huh?



Last Thursday, I had just finished my final exam in the film studies course I took. It was an essay test, and I had written on two topics, the first of which was Marxist influence in Disney's *The Bicycle Thief* and Bunuel's *Los Olvidados*. In *Los Olvidados*, which is translated as *The Young and the Damned*, a teenager returns to his street gang after having been incarcerated in a work camp for boys. Throughout the movie, he symbolizes the carnivore nature that pervades capitalism. He kills the only former member of the gang who left to get a job. He also frustrates every effort of another boy to reform himself. Life, in the film, is given little value because everyone is concerned with themselves and what they can gain.

After I finished the exam, I left to room and saw a sign saying that there was free food being served in the basement of the building. I went down there to see if there was anything I could eat. A local pizza and sub shop had brought in samples of their food to give out for free so that people at the school would know who they were and what they served. Of course, there was a huge hoard of people waiting to be served, crowding up toward the tables. I walked up to see if I could get anything to eat, and I was pushed back by people trying to get away from the tables. They didn't care who they had to shove; they had just gotten their free food by shoving their way to the front of the line, and now they would shove their way to the back.

I managed to get up to the front just in time to see people snatching twice their share out from under me until the food was gone. The guy in charge said there would be more to eat in a few minutes. I stood up at the front by the tables waiting to see what they would serve and feeling confident that I could get some this time. As it turned out, the next course was a big sub with salami or something on it, so I just decided to give up and get out of the way so I could breathe. As arms reached around me, I turned to leave, only to find people pressing against me from all sides. Tired and disgusted, I pushed my way through as other people, like robots, kept walking into me without thought of going around. I walked up the stairs to the ground floor, and then I left the building hungry but with no desire to stick around and see what the next course would be.

I could hardly help but to think about the essay I had just written about the predatory nature of capitalism expressed in those two films. There I had been, where everyone was in such a hurry to fend for themselves that they worked as an inefficient and insensitive mob. I guess it feels great when you are eating your three slices of pizza, thinking about how the fittest survive. It really scares me how thinking human beings can be transformed into selfish predators when it is them against the nameless faces in the crowd. I suppose this is all just preparation for the world of business, in which these people will walk all over faceless names on paper in order to reach the top.

I wonder where I will be left. I'm always told that I need to be more forceful and assertive. I need to push and shove and make sure I'm taken care of. Actually, that's the last thing I want to do. When I find myself in a situation like that I generally just stay timidly back and wait for attention. Needless to say, I do not always get it.

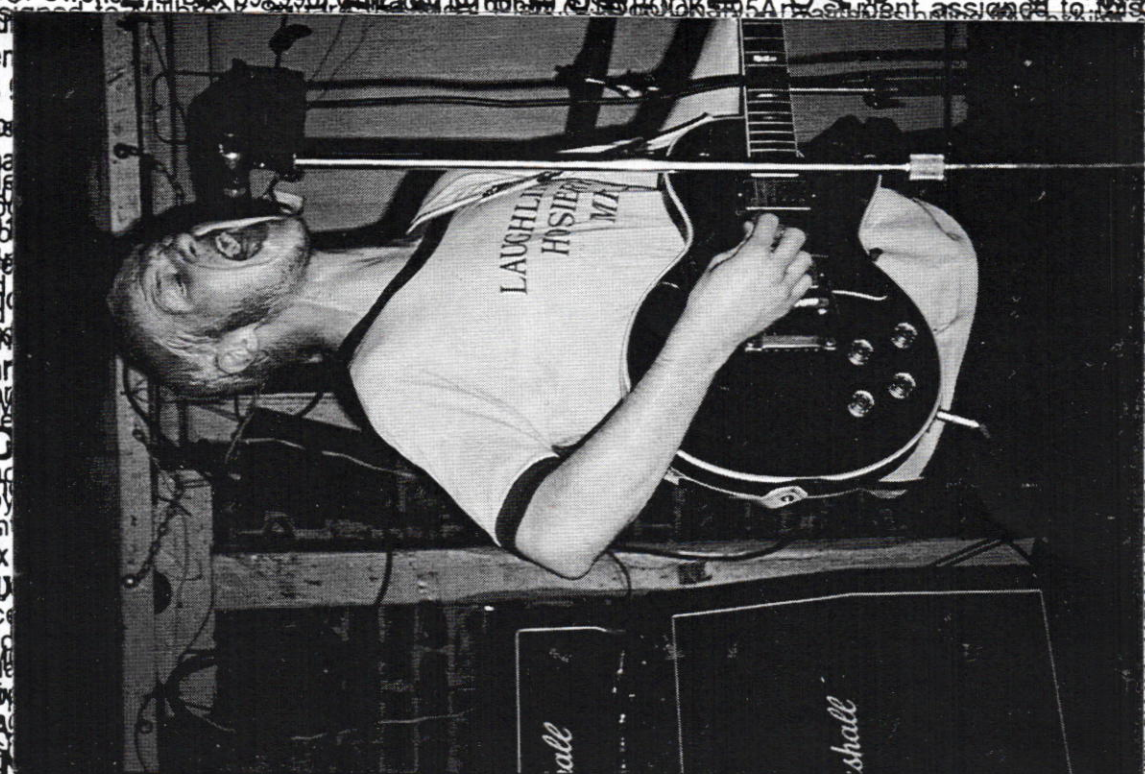
I have never been good at that sort of thing; I just don't push well. Crowd scenes in general depress me. It makes me ill just being in rooms with huge numbers of people. Maybe it is the anonymity that bothers me, and maybe it is the ruthless competition to be noticed among people who actually have charisma. Parties suck. I am just not big on striving for attention.

I really hope this will not sound like a pathetic sob story. "Oh, the poor baby can't take care of himself, so he blames everyone else." I am not aggressive or assertive. I lack those qualities. However, I think society is at fault, not me. The problem extends far, far beyond the scope of a kid not being able to get some free food. Society's error is rewarding behavior that only leads to the harm of others. In the same way that I can be dismissed as unassertive, the economic classes who are exploited as a means of lining everybody else's pockets can be dismissed as lazy or unmotivated. Of course, these two examples are not of the same degree, but a connection exists. When we are on top, we care not who we had to climb over, and we are made to believe that this is an okay way to view the world.

A very long time ago, Adam Smith wrote about the natural tendencies of consumers to maximize their happiness and well being. He wrote that we are programmed to put our own interests above everyone else's. (At least he has been interpreted that way.) Perhaps it is just the people who cannot assert themselves who notice the ruthlessness of crowds, and maybe it is only the disadvantaged who see the unfairness of our system. That would mean that things will continue to go on as they are, and those with the food and the money will not care. I prefer to think that the people who object to our predatory society are refusing to play along with the game. It is not that I don't push because I am unable to; I don't push because I don't want to. That would mean there is hope that people can change. Our culture cannot hide behind claims of innate behavior anymore. If we have yet to mature beyond that stage, we need to soon.

LINCOLN - photo: Ben Scholle

photo: Dave Mandel



ASHES - photo: Ben Scholle

photo: Ben Scholle



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